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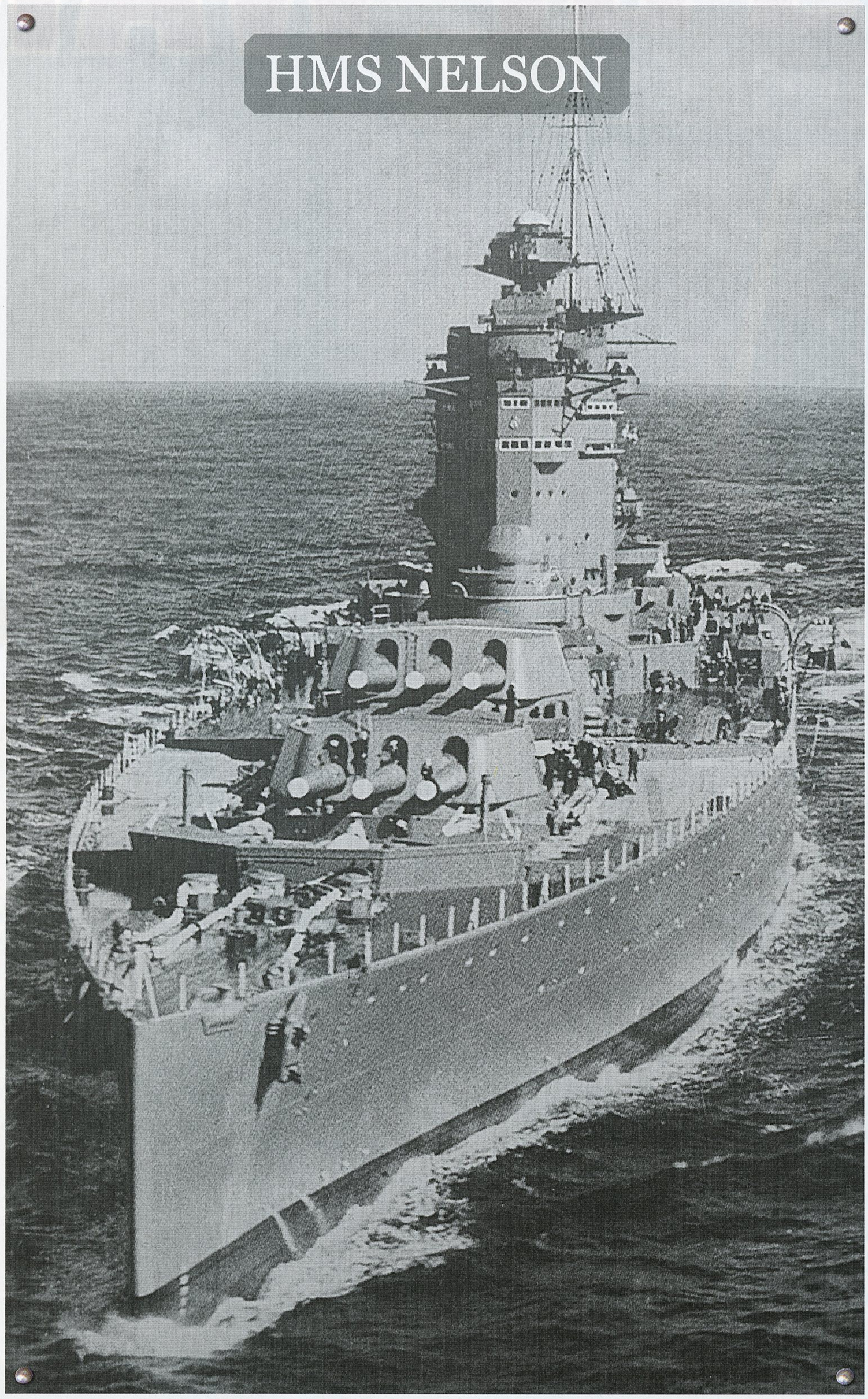

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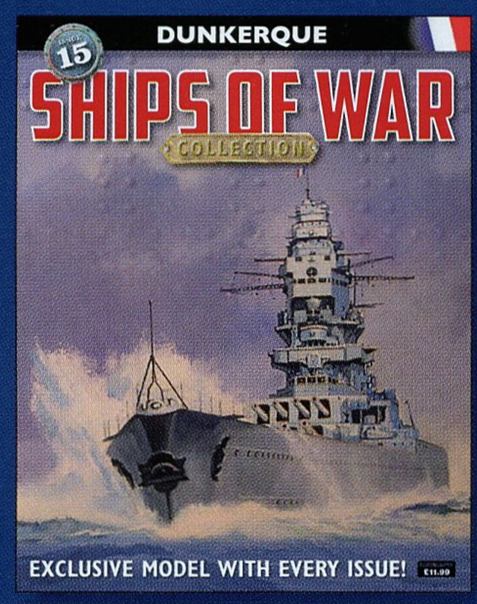

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LAUNCH

Among the UK's battleships in commission at the outbreak of World War 2, the most modern were the two vessels of the 'Nelson' class. They were unique among British warships in that they were completed with 16in (406mm) main guns, had been built between the wars and were the only capital ships allowed to be constructed for the Royal Navy under the terms of the Washington Treaty.

THE TWO BATTLESHIPS of the 'Nelson' class were destined to be underrated in service. Despite their modern features, which ensured they kept pace with the advanced designs being produced for other navies, the 'Nelsons' were arguably best known for their unusual layout, and their less-than-impressive top speed. However, at the outbreak of World War 2 they were among the most powerful battleships afloat anywhere in the world.

By the end of World War 1 the Royal Navy was in possession of a formidable fleet of battleships, but it was already clear to the Admiralty that most of these were no longer relevant to modern warfare. As well as the requirement for more modern warships, the Royal Navy had a keen eye on developments in the United States and Japan, and the emergence of two potential new enemies at sea. As the US Navy and Imperial Japanese Navy in turn began to develop new classes of battleships, the Royal Navy decided to respond with a design of its own. By the early 1920s, British studies envisaged huge warships approaching a displacement of 50,000 tons and armed with powerful 18in (457mm) guns.

The future of such colossal battleships was finally put to rest with the introduction of the Washington Treaty in 1922, a US-led initiative that put a cap on naval shipbuilding. Intended to prevent a global arms race, the treaty found favour with the British government although the Royal Navy remained sceptical.

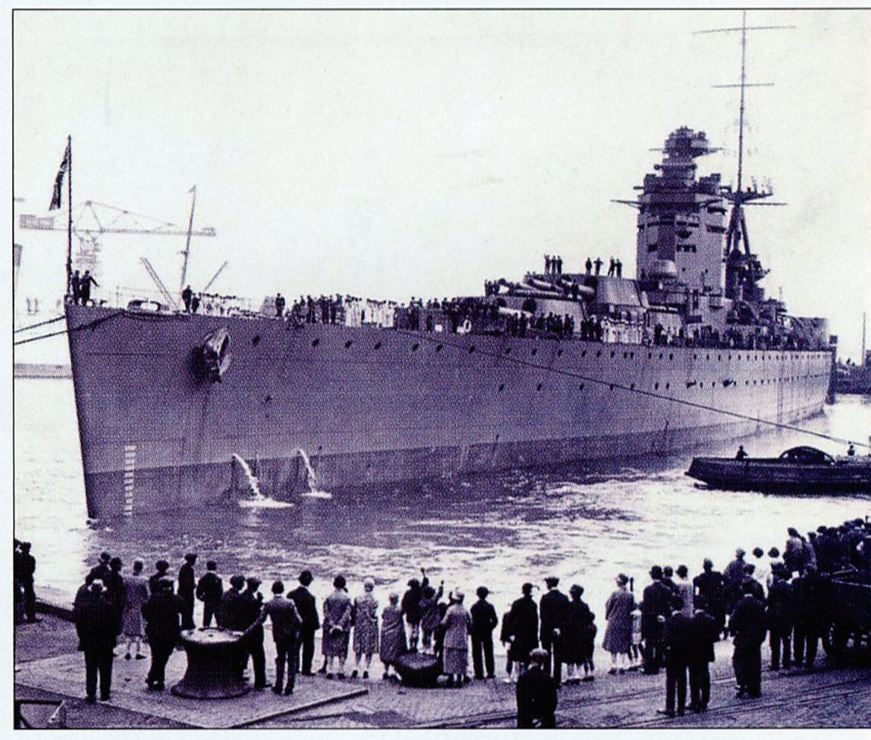
Under the terms of the Washington Treaty the UK was permitted to build two new battleships, each of which was limited in displacement to 35,000 tons standard. Any possibility of 18in (457mm) main weapons was ruled out by a commensurate limit on main gun calibre, set at 16in (406mm). While the treaty allowed the British to keep pace with rivals by checking the efforts of the Americans and Japanese, the Royal Navy remained unconvinced that a 35,000-ton warship could be constructed with an adequate blend of firepower, speed and protection.

The British soon settled on a concept that was designed to counter the US Navy's 'Maryland' class and the IJN's 'Nagato' class. The result was a serious compromise, based around the critical importance of 16in (406mm) weapons. The next factor to take into account was adequate armour for the battleships' intended role, which meant that speed was the area that would have to see sacrifices made. The aim was thus to achieve 23kts with standard displacement.

Design work began in December 1921, at which time the forthcoming treaty limits were already known. Based on the original specifications, the forthcoming battleships would be armed with nine 16in (406mm) main guns, supplemented by 12 6in (152mm) and four 4.7in (119mm) secondary weapons. Armour protection would consist of 15in (381mm) over the conning tower, 14in (356mm) for the magazine sides, 13in (330mm) for the machinery sides, 8in (203mm) of deck armour over the magazines, and between 5-4in (127-102mm) of deck armour over the machinery.

Two different designs were schemed, one with a 35,500-ton displacement and eight boilers, and another with a 35,000-ton displacement and six boilers. The latter study also featured a simplified bridge structure and fire control equipment. A design review in late 1921 suggested a number of key changes, including 15in (381mm) main guns, reduced deck protection and the smaller bridge. While the First Sea Lord rejected a switch to the smaller main guns, he did approve a reduction in deck armour by 0.5in (12.7mm) as well as use of a lighter grade of steel for construction. The depth of the side armour belt was also reduced.

Below: ***HMS* Nelson *was an impressive sight and always drew the crowds when in port.***



Two new configurations, known as P3 and Q3, differed in their use of nine 15in (381mm) guns in three triple turrets, and a slight reduction in armour, but were rejected in favour of the design known as 03, which retained the 16in (406mm) weapons and was approved in February 1922. In November of that year tenders were accepted from Cammell Laird and Armstrong-Whitworth, together valued at around £15 million (*Nelson* was marginally cheaper than her sister). On 28 December 1922 both vessels were laid down, before an official order was placed on 1 January 1923. While Cammell Laird was responsible for HMS *Rodney*, which was completed in August 1927, Armstrong-Whitworth completed HMS *Nelson* in June 1927, as the first of class.

ON BOARD

Early years

DURING A CEREMONY that took place on the Tyne on 9 August 1927, HMS *Nelson* was commissioned into service with the Royal Navy. The next day the new battleship was officially handed over to an advance party that had arrived from the naval dockyard at Portsmouth. By mid-August the battleship was in full commission at her new home on the south coast, and before the end of the month had become flagship for Vice-Adm Sir Hubert Brand, the commander of the Royal Navy's Atlantic Fleet (known as such until 1932, and thereafter as the Home Fleet). *Nelson* assumed this role from the World War 1-era battleship HMS *Revenge*, marking a changing of the guard in a modernising Royal Navy.

The potential of the Royal Navy's new battleships was revealed during trials in which sister vessel HMS *Rodney* recorded a top speed of 23.8kts that was achieved with a displacement of 33,660 tons, drawing upon 45,614shp (34,014kW) from the Brown Curtis geared turbines driving twin shafts.

Less successful was the main armament of the 'Nelson' class. This proved to be an Achilles' heel throughout the warships' years of service and required a number

EYE-WITNESS REPORT

Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral of the Fleet Peter John Hill-Norton

Former Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral of the Fleet Peter John Hill-Norton wrote the following reflection on HMS *Nelson* in the foreword to Ronald Careless' study of the battleship (Battleship *Nelson*, Arms and Armour Press, 1985):

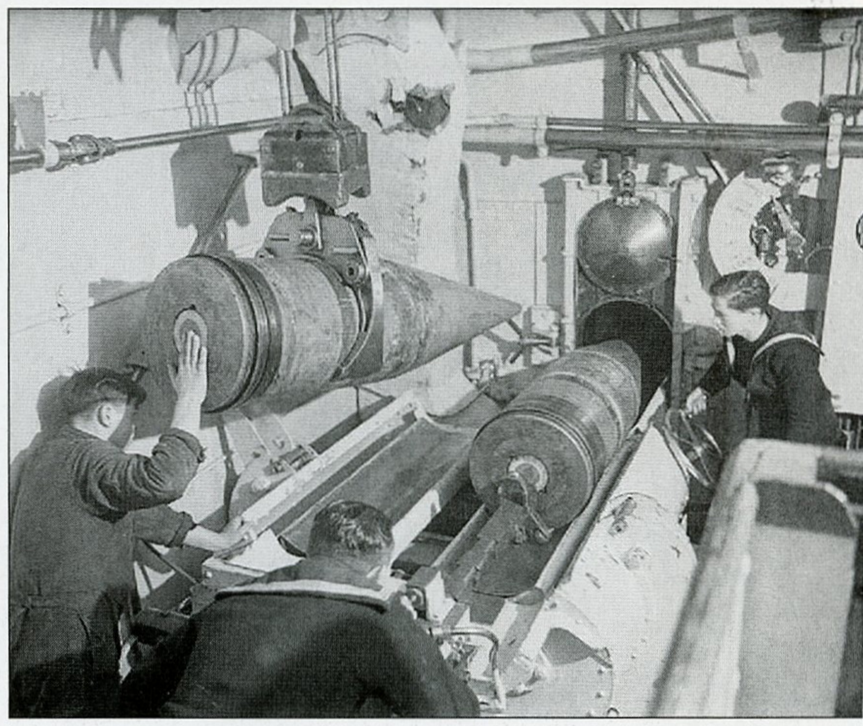
'I feel I knew HMS *Nelson* well, for she went to sea the year before I went to Dartmouth, and I later served in her sister, HMS *Rodney*. They were enormously powerful ships in the days when the big-gun battleship was all-powerful. It is strange to reflect that they cost £7 million apiece – the press, I remember well, dubbed them 'the seven-million-pound mystery ships…' Above all it is quite clear that HMS *Nelson* was a happy ship, and there is no higher praise than that in any Navy'.

of modifications to be made. Lack of reliability manifested itself in loading times for the shells that were far longer than expected, while the uneven number of guns meant that alternative salvoes had to be fired by the wing and centre guns, which reduced the rate of fire to one round per gun every 60-65 seconds. Most dramatic was the effect of the guns' blast on the vessels, this proving so severe that the bridge could not be manned when the 'X' turret fired with its guns trained abaft the beam. Meanwhile, the 'A' and 'B' turrets had a similar affect on the mess decks, when firing on forward bearings. The initial remedy was to restrict firing of the main guns to bearings that had less effect on the rest of the warship. The gun problem was never entirely solved, and among the measures introduced were blast 'curtains' below the openings in the bridge, and the sealing up of windows in the compass platform.

Other early problems included the 'sail effect' caused by the high superstructure. This meant the ships would not remain on a straight course when operating in high winds, with considerable helm required to counteract this. The ships were generally poor of handling when in shallow waters, and another problem was found to be steering at speeds below 8kts. However, these problems were not insurmountable, and increasing experience of their operations during the 1930s restored the Navy's confidence in the vessels. Compared to her sister, HMS *Nelson* also had a better reputation, based on superior handling and a reduced tendency to suffer from mechanical problems.

From 1930 onwards, both the 'Nelson' class ships began to receive a number of improvements and new equipment. Between 1933 and 1934, they had their anti-aircraft armament revised, with the addition of two MkV 'pom-pom' mountings fitted abreast the funnels. At the same time, the torpedo rangefinders were removed (as completed, both 'Nelsons' had two 24.5in/622mm torpedo tubes angled slightly off the bow on each side, provided with 12 Mk I torpedoes). Between 1934-35 the anti-aircraft armament was added to again, this time with two 0.5in (12.7mm) machine guns fitted on the after corners of the bridge structure.

In 1936 it was time to consider a more comprehensive reconstruction, and a number of different modifications were studied. These focused on boosting the secondary anti-aircraft armament to more adequately cope with modern threats, as well as provision for an aircraft, and increased belt armour.



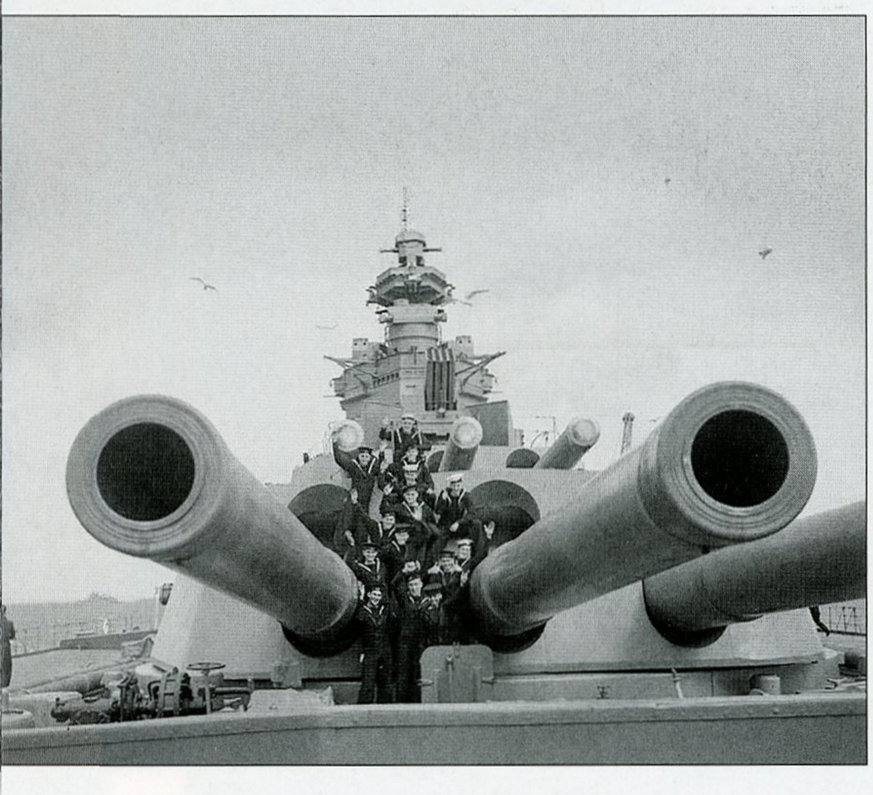
Above: ***Massive 16in (406mm) shells being loaded aboard the battleship.***

In order to provide an increased level of protection, the reconstruction was to involve deepening the side armour by adding a new 'shelf' mounted above the existing belt with a thickness measuring between 6-12in (152-305mm). Additional armour was also to be fitted on the lower deck forward. In the event, there was no dockyard space available for such a large-scale reconstruction until at least 1940, by which time the Royal Navy would be at war. Instead, a more modest series of repairs were carried out on both ships, with HMS *Nelson* going into dock in 1937.

While the scope of the armour protection involved in the alterations was reduced from that planned, HMS *Nelson* did receive additional armour on the lower deck and platform deck, modifications that were not made to HMS *Rodney* (beginning repairs in 1938). Other modifications made between 1937 and 1938 included rearranged steering gear, to improve protection against underwater attack, and one additional 'pom-pom' on the quarterdeck. In terms of aircraft, the refit saw a crane added on the port side of the bridge on the upper deck. This allowed HMS *Nelson* to operate a Supermarine Walrus flying-boat, while sister vessel HMS *Rodney* also received a catapult on the 'X' turret to permit operations by a Fairey Swordfish floatplane.

Left: ***Viewed from the stern, the* Nelson *did not look like your typical battleship.***

Below: ***The battleship's awesome firepower of nine 16in (406mm) guns was concentrated in three turrets at the front of the ship.***



H.M.S. "Nelson" firing a broadside with her 16-inch guns. This ship is armed with nine of these great guns and many smaller ones.

Into battle

WITH THE OUTBREAK of war in September 1939, HMS *Nelson* was part of the Home Fleet Battle Squadron at Scapa Flow and was the flagship of commander-in-chief Adm Sir Charles Forbes. The early weeks of the conflict saw the *Nelson* and *Rodney* undertake patrols of home waters, including an unsuccessful effort to intercept the German Navy's *Gneisenau*, *Köln* and nine destroyers during 7-8 October. The two battleships remained at sea until the end of the month, before *Rodney* suffered a rudder problem and returned home. This left *Nelson* on patrol until early December.

Returning to Loch Ewe at a speed of 13kts on 4 December 1939, HMS *Nelson* activated a German magnetic mine that detonated on the starboard side of the battleship. The explosion tore a hole in the hull and as water flooded in the warship began to keel to starboard. HMS *Nelson* was forced to remain in the loch until the surrounding waters could be swept of any more mines and, while there, temporary repairs were carried out. Addition of a degaussing coil was intended to protect against any other magnetic mines and, thus equipped, *Nelson* set sail for Portsmouth on 4 January 1940. A full seven months of repairs were now required to make good the damage inflicted by the mine. As well as considerable damage to the forecastle, the shock of the blast had also damaged the main armament loading equipment.

With the imminent threat of invasion of the south coast, the decision was taken to move HMS *Nelson* from Portsmouth after the repairs had been completed. In September 1940 the battleship sailed for the Clyde and the Home Fleet. From Scapa, operations would now be launched against the coast of Norway, with the objective of sinking German shipping. Despite a number of sweeps of Norwegian waters, HMS *Nelson* ended the year without having scored any successes.

While 1941 began with HMS *Rodney* pursuing the *Gneisenau*, HMS *Nelson* joined the battleship HMS *King George V* as part of the covering force for the raid on the Lofoten Islands in March.

Thereafter, *Nelson* took part in the escort of the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* to Freetown. In the meantime, it was HMS *Rodney* again that 'enjoyed' the lion's share of the action, during the pursuit of the *Bismarck*. Once the feared German battleship had been sunk, HMS *Nelson* intercepted the German supply ship *Gonzenheim* on 4 June 1941.

Left: ***HMS* Nelson *moored at Portsmouth harbour, with the rigging of HMS* Victory *visible in the background.*** Ivan Berryman

'All or nothing'

Among the unusual design features of the 'Nelson' class, the most distinctive was the 'all or nothing' scheme of armouring and the concentration of the primary (16in/406mm) gun turrets forward of the bridge, with all secondary 6in (152mm) guns arranged aft. Not revealed until after World War 2 was the innovative 'water protection', in which liquid-loaded vertical bulkheads were arranged below the waterline. Containing some 2,800 tons of water, these bulkheads were intended to absorb the detonation of any torpedo that might strike the vessel. By not flooding the vertical compartments during peacetime, the 'Nelson' class saved 1,300 tons on average, and thus remained below the treaty limit.

FACT FILE: HMS NELSON

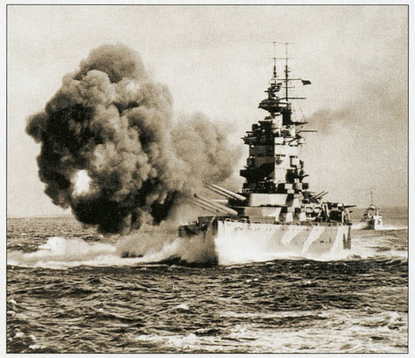
SPECIFICATIONS

As completed, HMS *Nelson* displaced 33,500 tons standard, but by 1945 this had increased to 44,045 tons fully loaded. It was 710ft long (216m), had a beam of 106ft (32m) and a draught of 33ft (10m). The battleship had a top speed of 23.5kts and a range of 7,000nm (12,964km) at 16kts. The ship had a complement of over 1,350 men.

AIRCRAFT

HMS *Nelson* had facilities to operate the Supermarine Walrus, a three-/four-seat observation and air-sea rescue amphibian flying-boat of biplane configuration and powered by a single Bristol Pegasus radial engine. The shipboard version of the Walrus could be armed with up to 500lb (227kg) of bombs or depth charges on underwing racks, in addition to a single 0.303in (7.7mm) machine gun in the open bow position.

FIREPOWER



Primary armament

The battleships' powerful main guns were 16in (406mm) weapons, unique to the 'Nelson' class, albeit originally intended for an un-built class of battlecruisers. The main armament was grouped forward to concentrate the armour belt. The BL 16in MkI guns were 45-calibre weapons, arranged in three triple turrets. The mounting could be elevated to 40 degrees, providing the guns with a maximum range of 38,400yds (35,113m). Each of the turrets weighed around 1,450 tons and was provided with 100 rounds of ammunition per gun.

Secondary armament

This consisted of 12 6in (152mm) MkXXII guns of 50 calibre arranged in six twin MkXVIII turrets. The turrets could be elevated to 60 degrees, for use in the anti-aircraft role. Each gun was provided with 150 rounds of ammunition, which could be added to with smoke and practice shells if required.

In terms of armament, the weak link was certainly the anti-aircraft guns, comprising six 4.7in (119mm) Quick-Firing MkVIII guns. Eight single-barrelled 'pom-poms' were fitted in the original configuration, but by 1933 two eight-barrelled mountings had been added on platforms abreast the forward side of the funnel.

CAMOUFLAGE

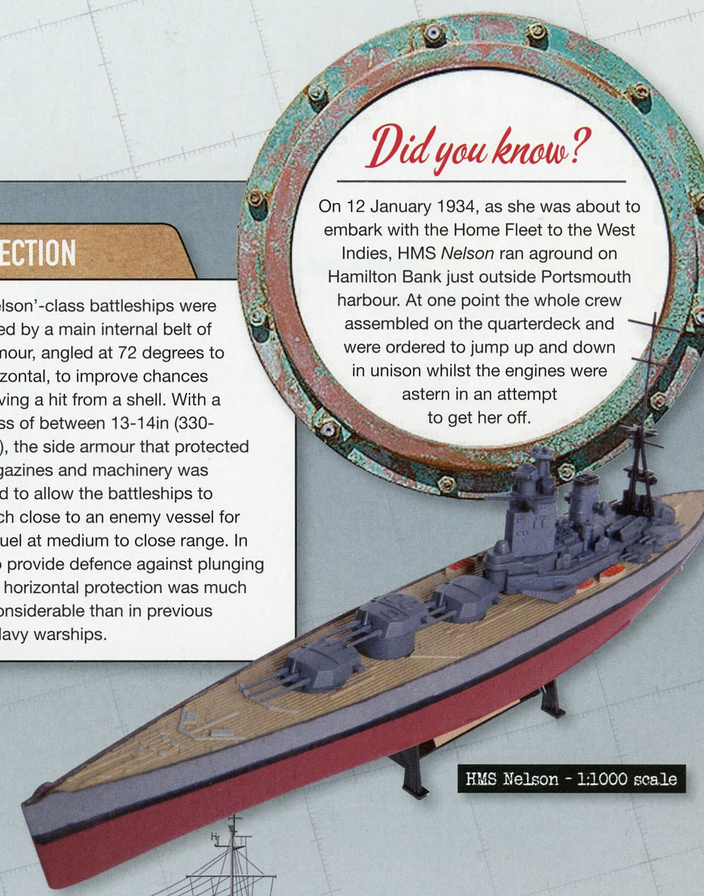
The 'Nelson' class went through various iterations of camouflage during their service careers. With the outbreak of World War 2, a uniform grey scheme was adopted, consisting of either Medium Grey or Dark Grey. At the same time, most of the wooden decking was also painted over. It is also possible that at one time in the war HMS *Nelson* wore a dark brown colour. By spring 1942 both ships received the Admiralty Disruptive camouflage, which became increasingly simplified as the war progressed. During her refit in the US, the 1942 design was replaced with an Admiralty Standard scheme.

PROTECTION

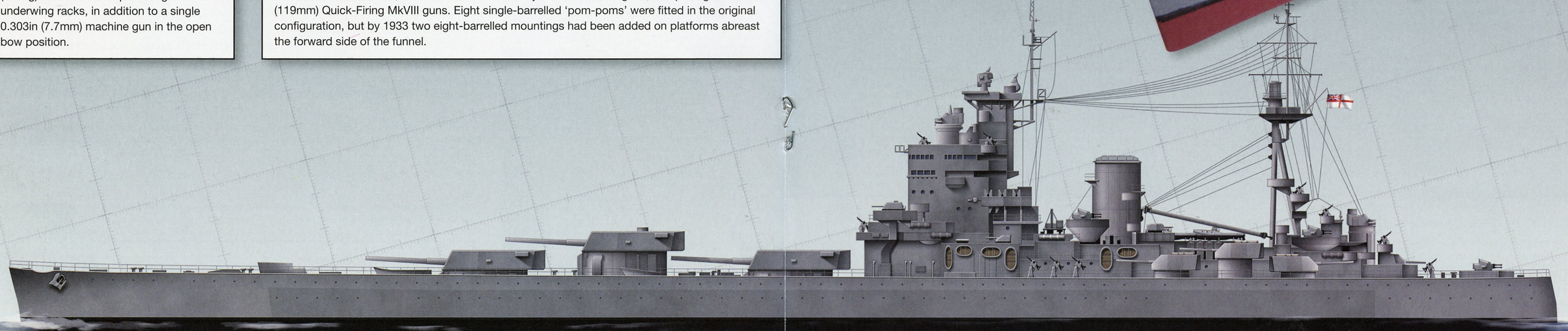
The 'Nelson'-class battleships were protected by a main internal belt of side armour, angled at 72 degrees to the horizontal, to improve chances of surviving a hit from a shell. With a thickness of between 13-14in (330-356mm), the side armour that protected the magazines and machinery was intended to allow the battleships to approach close to an enemy vessel for a gun duel at medium to close range. In order to provide defence against plunging fire, the horizontal protection was much more considerable than in previous Royal Navy warships.

Did you know?

On 12 January 1934, as she was about to embark with the Home Fleet to the West Indies, HMS *Nelson* ran aground on Hamilton Bank just outside Portsmouth harbour. At one point the whole crew assembled on the quarterdeck and were ordered to jump up and down in unison whilst the engines were astern in an attempt to get her off.



HMS Nelson - 1:1000 scale



Mediterranean adventures

Above: **Nelson's *mighty guns breath fire during operations in the Mediterranean.***

IN JULY 1941, HMS *Nelson* left the Home Fleet to join the Gibraltar-based Force 'H' as flagship for a Malta convoy operation. After taking part in manoeuvres, Operation 'Substance' was undertaken later in the same month. By this stage in the war, another round of modifications had been undertaken on both members of the 'Nelson' class. By mid-1940 two 0.79in (20mm) anti-aircraft cannon were to be found on the 'B' turret, while the refit in the United States had, by September 1942, added two more MkVI 'pom-poms' and one four-barrelled MkVII 'pom-pom' fitted on the 'B' turret, in place of the aforementioned cannon. Other changes included replacement of the previous Type 279 radar with the Type 281, Type 271 radar added to the mainmast, and Type 284 gunnery radar. Another aid to protection was fitted in the form of submarine lookout positions on either side of the conning tower platform. One short-lived anti-aircraft weapon that graced the 'B' and 'X' turrets of HMS *Nelson* was the co-called Unrotated Projector. This comprised an AA rocket based on a parachute flare, which carried a mine suspended by a cable. It was intended that a barrage of these mines be put up and that enemy aircraft would fly into the cables. The Unrotated Projector proved to be a flawed concept and the equipment (two 20-round launchers on each turret) had been removed from the battleship by late 1941.

In the wake of Operation 'Substance', *Nelson* took part in further Malta convoy operations between late July and early August 1941, and again at the end of August. The last week of August also saw the battleship's involvement in Operation 'Mincemeat', the Allied attack on Sardinia. The Malta convoys also involved providing cover to vital aircraft-carrying operations, including Operation 'Status II'. Both *Nelson* and *Rodney* were involved in convoy protection during Operation 'Halberd'. This nine-ship convoy set sail from Gibraltar and was escorted by *Nelson*, *Rodney*, *Prince of Wales* and *Ark Royal*. Efforts were made to conceal the presence of both 'Nelson' class battleships. The

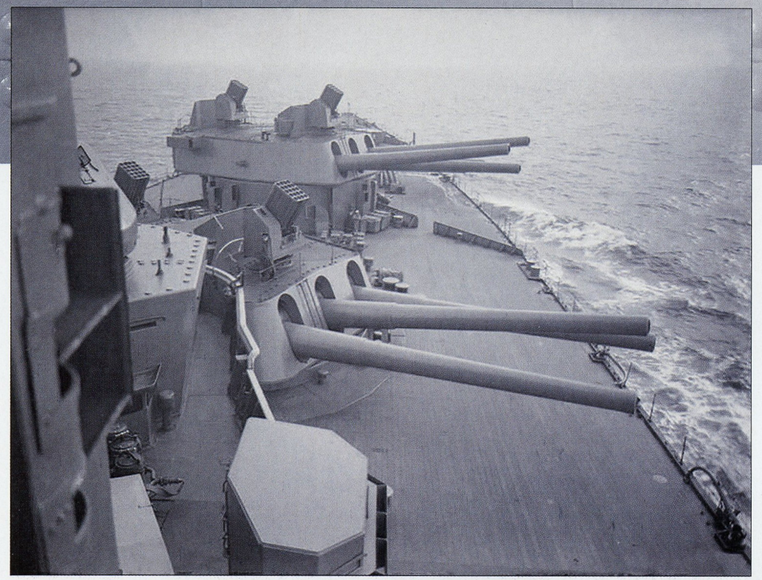
EYE-WITNESS REPORT

Admiral Edward Neville Syfret

Admiral Edward Neville Syfret, who was later knighted for his part in Operation 'Pedestal', the critical Malta convoy, made the following address to the ships in the convoy on the first day of the operation, 10 August 1942:

'The garrison and people of Malta, who have been defending their island so gallantly against incessant attacks by the German and Italian air forces, are in urgent need of replenishments of food and military supplies. These we are taking to them and I know that every officer and man in the convoy and its escort will do his utmost to ensure they reach Malta safely.

'You may be sure that the enemy will do all in his power to prevent the convoy getting through and it will require every exertion on our part to see that he fails in his attempt. During the next few days all ships will be in the first and second degree of readiness for long periods. When you are on watch be especially vigilant and alert, and, for that reason, when you are off duty get all the sleep you can. Every one of us must give his best. Malta looks to us for help. We shall not fail them.'



Above: ***One short-lived anti-aircraft weapon that graced the 'B' and 'X' turrets of HMS*** **Nelson** ***was the co-called Unrotated Projector rocket launcher.***

commander's flag was raised in *Rodney*, and *Nelson* steamed as if heading back to the UK. On 25 September the convoy passed through the Strait of Gibraltar, *Nelson* taking the place of *Rodney* and steaming eastwards along the African coast to maintain the deception. Despite these efforts, the Italians were well aware of the arriving British force.

On 27 September 1941, a torpedo launched from Italian aircraft hit HMS *Nelson* forward. Fighters from *Ark Royal* had warded off a first attack, but the second attack was more successful. Targeting *Nelson*, the Fiat BR.20 aircraft pressed on through heavy anti-aircraft fire, and although one aircraft's torpedo missed, another scored a direct hit forward, before being shot down in turn. Despite the hit – which struck almost the same position as had been affected by the earlier magnetic mine two years earlier – HMS *Nelson* was not badly damaged enough to withdraw, although her speed was now much reduced. Ultimately, the operation had been a success for the British. Vital supplies had reached Malta and only one merchantman was lost. Meanwhile, the damaged *Nelson* would arrive safely back in Gibraltar. Thereafter, full repairs were carried out in Rosyth on the Firth of Forth, beginning in October 1941. It was not until May 1942 that HMS *Nelson* was ready to return to action.

It had been planned to send *Nelson* to join *Rodney* in the Far East, but with both battleships on their way they were recalled for another Malta convoy – the biggest yet.

Operation 'Pedestal' passed through the Strait of Gibraltar on the night of 9-10 August 1942. 'Pedestal' hit an early hurdle when HMS *Eagle* was torpedoed by a submarine on the 11th. That evening a succession of air attacks began. The warship's commander, Capt George Blundell, recalled the impression made by the barrage of gunfire put up against the approaching aircraft: 'When it got darkish about 21.15hrs the barrage put up by the fleet and screen was aesthetically one of the weirdest and most beautiful sights I have ever seen. People who had been up on the SP Deck [Signal Projection Deck] and seen it all had a look on their faces as if they'd seen a vision – the sort of look a man would have on his face just after he'd looked on the Almighty. It was the purple sea and the black sky and the red in the west, and the panels of rubies of the tracer necklaces and the lurid bursts in the sky and the dark little ships putting up this miracle display.'

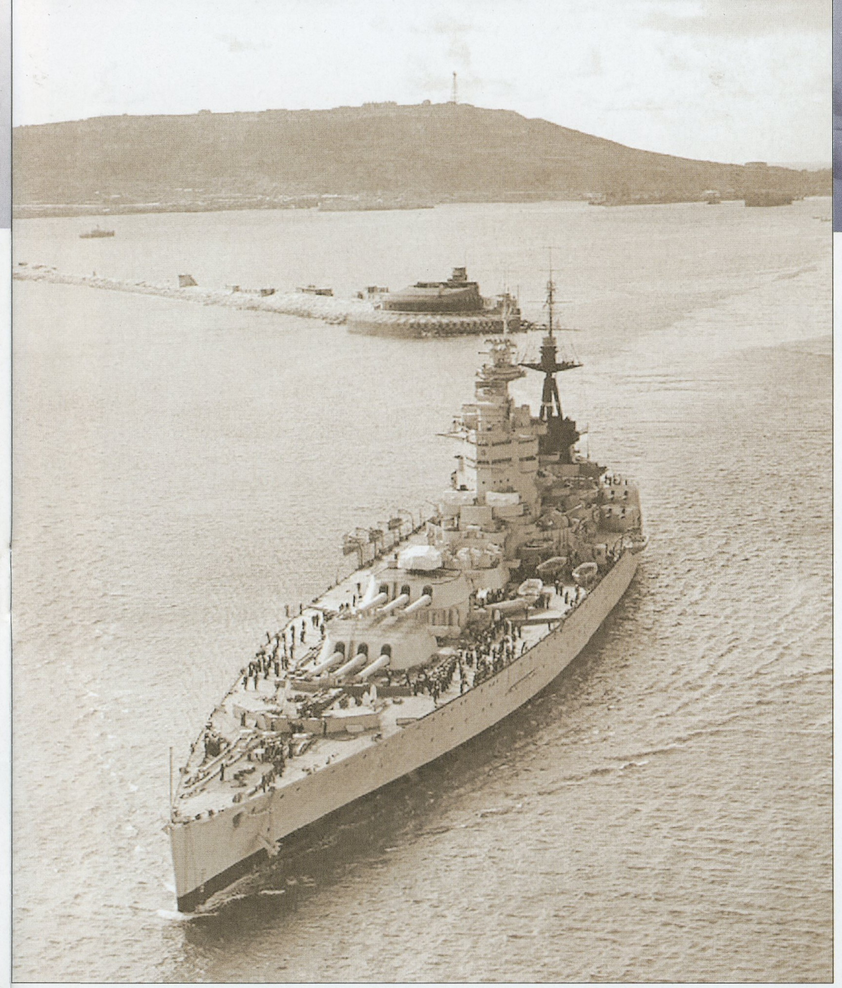
Attacks from the air and by submarines continued during the morning of the 12th. Although *Nelson* and *Rodney*, as key elements of the Allied anti-aircraft capability, were particular targets for the Italians, they survived unscathed.

By May 1942 the 'Nelsons' had lost their 0.5in (12.7mm) machine guns, which were replaced with directors for the 'pom-poms'. A total of 17 single 0.79in (20mm) anti-aircraft guns were added, together with additional directors for the 'pom-poms' and revised radar: four Type 283 sets and replacement of the Type 271 with new Type 273 equipment. By the middle of the same year each of the two battleships' light anti-aircraft batteries had been supplemented by over 40 0.79in (20mm) guns, and the aircraft catapult was finally removed.

After Operation 'Pedestal', HMS *Nelson* was again in need of refit. This was completed at Rosyth in October 1942, after which she returned to join Force 'H'. Both *Nelson* and *Rodney* continued to provide their service to the force until July 1943, when they both provided covering fire during the Allied invasion of Sicily.

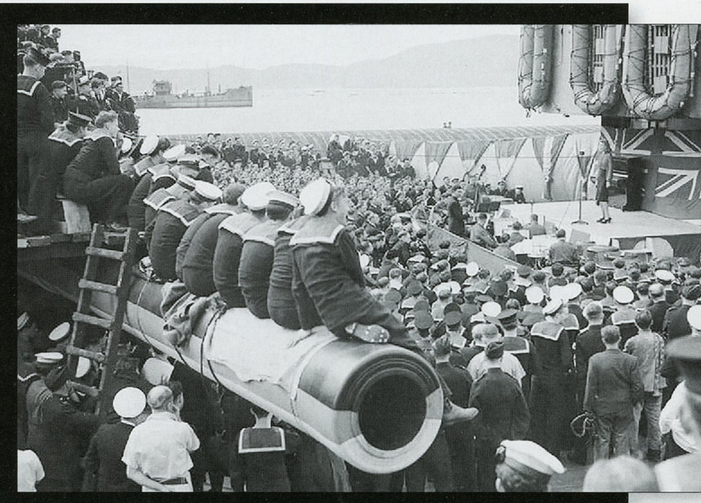
After all her action in support of the Malta convoys, it was fitting that the armistice between the Allies and Italy was signed on board HMS *Nelson* in the Grand Harbour, Malta, on 29 September 1943.

After the Mediterranean, it was time to lend support to the invasion of northwest Europe, for which the two battleships began their preparations in the spring of 1944.



Left: ***A fine study of HMS*** **Nelson** ***as she leaves Portland harbour.***

Life on board was not all hard work. These images show the crew enjoying some well-earned down time during a visit to Gibraltar in January 1943 and being entertained by stars from the West End, including actress Phyllis Stanley.



D-Day and the Far East

AFTER HER SISTER HMS *Rodney* had provided shore bombardment during the D-Day landings, it was time for HMS *Nelson* to join the invasion of 'fortress Europe' on 11 June 1944.

Arriving off the coast of France on the 11th, HMS *Nelson* spent the next week bombarding targets on land. In all, the battleship fired almost 1,000 rounds of 16in (406mm) and 6in (152mm) ammunition in the course of 20 separate bombardments. The Second Gunnery Officer, Lt Cdr E. H. Pratt, remarked upon the efficiency of this fire: 'Our fire was pretty accurate. One shell from our big guns scored a direct hit on and wiped out an automobile filled with fleeing Jerry gunners, who were miles from the coast and unseen by us. It was another example of how well our plane-spotting observers directed our aim. We also took time out to smash an anti-aircraft gun that was annoying our spotter, and hit our target with the next round.'

After sustaining minor damage from a mine, HMS *Rodney* departed the French coast on 22 June for another refit, this time on the other side of the Atlantic, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Between September 1944 and January 1945 the battleship underwent refit in the US and among the changes introduced were four 1.6in (40mm) Bofors anti-aircraft cannon and 24 single 0.79in (20mm) cannon. On her return to war, she sailed for the East Indies as the flagship of the Royal Navy's East Indies Fleet. The assigned role for HMS *Nelson* was once again bombardment and the battleship arrived in Colombo in July 1945. Between 24-26 July, *Nelson* was involved in Operation 'Livery', in which bombardments were undertaken in concert with air strikes off Phuket, in the Malay Peninsula. As of August 1944, HMS *Nelson* was part of the occupation force for Penang. On 28 August, soon after the Japanese surrender, *Nelson* hosted senior Japanese officers to agree to the terms of surrender with the British. Penang formally surrendered on 4 September, in a ceremony that again took place aboard HMS *Nelson*. Subsequent duties included Operation 'Zipper' – the occupation of Western Malaya. As such, *Nelson* sailed for Malaya on 8 September 1945. It was not until 12 September that all Japanese forces in Southeast Asia officially surrendered, and HMS *Nelson* was present in Singapore when this was undertaken. The sojourn in the Far East came to an end on 13 November 1945, when *Nelson* sailed for Portsmouth.

At the end of 1945, HMS *Nelson* returned to the United Kingdom and replaced her sister, HMS *Rodney*, as the flagship of the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow. Recent modernisation ensured that *Nelson* survived in service post-war and in 1946 she joined the Training Squadron at Portland for a period of two years. Finally, in 1948, both HMS *Nelson* and *Rodney* were laid up in the Firth of Forth and used as targets for aerial bombing by the Fleet Air Arm. After this less than auspicious end to her service career, *Nelson* and her sister were scrapped.

Admiral Nelson

Named in honour of Horatio Nelson, 1st Viscount Nelson, the victor at the Battle of Trafalgar, the captain of HMS *Nelson* would recall the ship's namesake each Trafalgar Day, 21 October, commemorating the British defeat of the combined French and Spanish fleets in 1805. In 1945, while sailing in the Far East, Capt Clifford Calson had the following words for the crew: 'This is the man whose life has been the standard and the example on which we have tried to base our conduct and training in the Navy ever since. This is the man whose inspiration over the long years we owe the endurance through the dark days of this war... until at last we have come to victory.'

Right: ***At the end of the war in the Far East, HMS* Nelson *hosted senior Japanese officers to agree to the terms of surrender with the British.***

Below left: ***HMS* Nelson *at the end of September 1947 flying her paying off pennant. Along with the* Rodney *she was sold in 1948 for scrapping. By 1950 she was gone.***

Below: ***HMS* Nelson *in all her nine gun glory.***

NEXT ISSUE

DUNKERQUE

France's answer to the German 'pocket battleships', the 'Dunkerque' class was light, fast and powerful. The lead ship had an eventful service life, being badly damaged by the British in the battle of Mers-el-Kébir.

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